

The law of unintended consequences, often cited but rarely defined, is that actions of people—and especially of government—always have effects that are unanticipated or "unintended." Economists and other social scientists have heeded its power for centuries; for just as long, politicians and popular opinion have largely ignored it.

A great deal of government regulation is prompted by the best of intentions. For example, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was enacted with the noble intention of ending discrimination against the disabled. However, during the four years following passage of the ADA, employment among disabled men fell nearly 8% more than employment among nondisabled men. The banning of DDT has saved some species of birds that were adversely affected by the pesticide, but it has resulted in the deaths of millions of people from malaria because mosquitoes today are not being killed as effectively as they once were. Cigarette tax increases designed to raise state tax revenue in Washington, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New Jersey have resulted in decreased tax revenues because smokers simply purchase cigarettes in a neighboring state or over the Internet.

Broadband over Power Line (BPL) holds the potential to be another example of the law of unintended consequences. Widespread broadband access is indeed a worthy goal, but please thoroughly research the consequences of BPL to other services before implementing anything. Like the Citizen's Band Radio Service and some Part 15 devices, once the FCC lets this genie out of the bottle it will be very difficult if not impossible to put it back in.

Sincerely,

William R. Tippet II